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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, May 16, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Dressing the Salad." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,  
U.S.D.A.

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I don't know whether you ever considered how much dressing a salad is like dressing yourself. If you put on the wrong clothes, those that don't fit or are unbecoming, or if you dress carelessly, well, you know how dowdy and unattractive you can look. And you also know that if you dress with care in styles that suit your type, why, then you'll look smart and interesting and will bring out your best features. That's the way with salads, too. Put the wrong dressing on a salad, or dress it carelessly, and you'll have a dish that doesn't appeal in looks or taste. But fix your salad with care and dress it suitably and it will be delightful to look at and even better to taste.

For example, most people enjoy a whipped-cream dressing on fruit salad. That delicious mixture of mayonnaise and whipped cream and currant jelly or that golden combination of mayonnaise, whipped cream and strained honey -- these just seem made to dress a bowl of chilled mixed fruits. But put that same dressing on crisp greens, and few people will care for a second look or a second taste. The same holds true with other dressings. A French dressing all fixed up with garlic or onion juice and chili sauce or other such seasonings is delicious on vegetables. But think how quickly it would spoil a fruit salad. It's like clothes, you see. For the best effects, you have to suit the dressing to the type.

We all know that simple conservative styles in clothes are more generally becoming than elaborate styles. Well, here again, the same rule holds for salads. The simplest dressing of them all probably suits more types of salad than any other. The French get the credit for this useful mixture of oil, vinegar and seasonings. And this is about your best choice for all-around use. French dressing suits most fruit and vegetable salads. You can use it on greens of any kind. And you can use it to marinate meat or fish or fowl -- or cooked vegetables cut up for salad. But even French dressing can be successfully adapted to suit the food you are using it on. For example, for fruit salad the most successful dressing has a trace of sweet and a trace of tartness combined. So for fruit salad make your dressing with a bit of sugar and with lemon, orange or grapefruit juice instead of vinegar. With a green salad, you need a dash of something livelier in your dressing. So add a bit of horseradish, or use tarragon or spiced vinegar. The French have a way of rubbing the salad bowl with a little garlic before they mix the dressing. Garlic gives that famous Gallic touch. For a plain head-lettuce salad Roquefort cheese dressing is very popular -- cheese crumbled into the French dressing. Or you can use a more colorful mixture that contains chopped green pepper, red pimiento, onion, parsley and a bit of celery seed.



But I mustn't spend so much time talking about French dressing or I'll neglect the other dressing possibilities. Next to the French mixture, mayonnaise is the most universal dressing. Naturally, mayonnaise makes a heartier salad. But you can use it in most of the salads that we have mentioned for French dressing. Cooked vegetable salads, meat, fish and chicken salads you let stand or "marinate" with French dressing first, and then serve with mayonnaise. You can use mayonnaise either mixed in the salad or as a decorative dab on top. With salads of raw vegetables like cucumber, tomatoes or celery you put it on the very last minute. Mayonnaise is also a favorite for cream cheese and nut salad and for jellied vegetable mixtures. But for a bowl of crisp greens, it can never take the place of your simple oil and vinegar mixture.

Now about cooked dressings. There are many different kinds of these. As most of them are thickened with egg, you cook them in the upper part of the double boiler. There's that good cooked dressing seasoned with mustard that you use on cabbage slaw. There's another good-looking delicately tart and sweet dressing for fruit salad that you can make with sour cream. Some people prefer a well-seasoned cooked dressing to mayonnaise for meat or fish salads, because the cooked dressing isn't so rich in oil.

Well, now a few more points of similarity between dressing a salad and dressing ourselves. For best effects, dress daintily, immaculately, with the greatest care. That goes for people and salads. A carelessly prepared salad can be the most unappetizing dish on earth. Food that is too juicy, wilted greens, too much dressing, too much waiting -- these are a few of the things that spoil any salad. Be sure your salad ingredients are all fresh and dainty. Be sure they're never moist and sloppy. Dry the greens well before you put on the dressing. Otherwise, the dressing will roll off "like tears from a wall-flower's cheeks." And drain the juice from fruits and vegetables. Too much juice or too much dressing exhausts all crispness. Temperature is important, too. Salads can't sit around and wait in a warm room. All ingredients must be cold. Chill the bowl and the plates and the dressing before serving.

Most raw salad ingredients are dressed the very last minute, you know, for dressing soon wilts crisp green things. As someone expressed it the other day, "Waiting salads are wilted salads, and wilted salads aren't worth waiting for."

And that brings us to a May menu featuring a salad bowl. You can have your choice with this menu -- either a combination vegetable bowl or a spring fruit bowl. The vegetable bowl will contain a couple of kinds of greens, maybe lettuce and watercress. And it will contain sliced tomatoes, radishes, cucumbers and green pepper. The dressing will be French, seasoned with a bit of onion and perhaps some horseradish. Now, if you choose the fruit salad bowl instead, you'll use the same greens with strawberries, diced pineapple, and sliced bananas. French dressing again but made with grapefruit and lemon juice and a bit of sugar.

Now for the menu: Lamb roast with stuffing; Buttered new beets; Spring onions on toast; Spring salad bowl; Butterscotch pie.

